

THE WILLIAM ROCKHILL NLLSON GALLERY OF ART

AND ATKINS MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS

NEWSFLASHES

May,

1939

LOAN EXHIBITION: For the month of May, the loan galleries will be installed with two groups of water colours. These exhibitions will open on Sunday, May 7th, and continue through the month.

The North and Central galleries will be hung with the Fourteenth Annual Exhibition of the Ohio Water Colour Society. This same organization exhibited in the Gallery during the month of March of 1938 and the entries were such fine examples of this exacting medium that the society was invited to show again. The organization was founded many years ago by Josephine Klippart for the purpose of encouraging the medium of water colour and of late the annual exhibition has assumed such importance that it is circulated all over the United States. All entries must be residents of the state of Ohio and the works to be included in the traveling group are chosen by a jury.

It is interesting to note in this year's group that more than half of the artists were represented in the exhibition of 1938. "The Victorian Vase" by Lydia Reeder is a fine composition with free brush strokes and an excellent differentiation of surfaces and textures. Roy E. Wilhelm is represented by "Winter", in which is seen a bleak farm house, hay stacks, and a make-shift barn. The whole is pervaded by a sense of sharp cold, not alleviated by the fine handling of the drifted snow. "Studio Window" by Marian Maxwell is an unstudied arrangement of potted plants and fruit from a sharp, almost candid-camera angle. Other contributors remembered from last year include Elizabeth Abernathy, Carolyn Bradley, Norman Doane, Jessie Roberts, Glenn Shaw, and Edna Martha Way.

The south loan gallery will be installed with a group of new water colours by the Santa Fe artist, Cady Wells, who is well known in Kansas City. Mr. Wells recently exhibited these same paintings at the Fogg Museum and the Wadsworth Atheneum with marked success. The Boston Transcript review was especially penetrating; "To enter the gallery of Cady Well's pictures is not an average experience. You are summoned at once to grapple with an unfamiliar scene. You are asked to consider not merely a weird land and its pathetic saints, but to see it as a design from the mind of the artist, in patterns of curving strata and seemingly unreal colours. You are introduced to a series of scenes over which broods a spirit of stillness, solitude, and melancholy. The mood of this country dominates its painters; its spell is upon Mr. Wells and he communicates it with power." The reviewer found the abstractions especially sincere and serious and likened some of them in spirit and colour to the Japanese prints of Harunobu.

The water colour technique of Cady Wells has become almost as personal as that of John Marin and he is steadily forging ahead in craftsmanship and sincerity. It is a pleasure to present his latest work to his many friends in Kansas City.

MASTERPIECE OF THE MONTH: A tapestry upholstered Louis XV arm-chair, a superb example of the craft of the cabinetmakers of 18th century France, will be featured as the Masterpiece for May. Coming from Paris, it has been only recently acquired and rivals in beauty and workmanship any of the examples from the same period in the Louvre.

The ample and comfortable frame is stuccoed and gilded and the sheen of the gold over the red boll ground is so rich that it gives the impression of beaten metal. The lines are restrained and subdued, a series of subtle curves that flow easily and rhythmically from the top of the back, down through the swelling arms, into the refined cabriole leg. The carving of simple, natural flowers and typical rocaille motifs is especially crisp and restrained. It has all the life and vitality that is traditional with French sculpture from Jean Goujon to Houdon.

Particularly beautiful in its colour harmony is the tapestry seat and back, obviously woven especially for this chair. Against a warm terra cotta ground are clear blues, pale greens, tans, and soft pinks. The scenes of both the seat and the back are enframed in

rococo motifs, naturalistic flowers and shells. On the back is depicted some parable, an elderly man in a flowing white wig of the late Louis XIV period is seated at a table; he is receiving money from a younger man and seems to be admonishing him. It may be the parable of the faithful steward. The scene of the seat is full of movement and gayety and recalls the Chinoiserie element so popular in the 18th Century. It is taken from an Aesop fable and shows a frolicsome monkey riding astride a dolphin.

In France of the 18th century, cabinetmakers and tapestry designers rivalled painters and sculptors in the position in society which they occupied. Those who held royal patents were housed on the ground floor of the Louvre, in the wing that skirts the Seine River. Often they signed their handiwork with as much pride as Boucher brushed his name in the corner of a painting of a sensuous nude. Our new acquisition is such a superior example of the combined craft of the chair maker and textile weaver, that it must have been executed for royalty, perhaps for the Grand Trianon, to grace one of the apartments of Mme. Pompadour herself.

WEDNESDAY EVENING LECTURES: The final lecture in the series of a survey of Italian Painting will be given by the Director on Wednesday Evening, May 3rd. It will be devoted to the last great phase of Italian painting, that of the work of the outstanding genius Giovanni Battista Tiepolo and his immediate circle of followers. Tiepolo was one of the greatest decorators of all time and even today numerous churches and palaces in Venice bear testimony to his ability to cover vast wall spaces with moving and graceful compositions, marked especially by their refined and harmonious colours. The painting of Tiepolo's son, Domenicho, and the delightful genre subjects of Pietro Longhi will also be discussed.

The attendance for these lectures has been especially gratifying throughout the winter and the Director takes this opportunity to thank those who have been so loyal in their interest. It is planned to give a similar survey of French painting for the coming season and this is one in which the Gallery Collection is especially large and comprehensive.

The Gallery will remain open Wednesday Evenings through May 24th. After that date the summer closing will be in effect.

GALLERY CHANGES: Following the highly successful Chagall exhibition, Gallery XVI will be hung with a series of aquatints from Goya's "Los Caprichos". Perhaps his best known work, their popularity has remained undiminished since the days in the early part of the 19th century when they first appeared in Paris, to the present time. Goya wrote a prospectus which in a measure explains their cryptic meaning: "I have chosen subjects which afford opportunities to turn into ridicule and to stigmatise those prejudices, impostures and hypocracies which have been consecrated by time". He claimed no personal satire, but the moment they appeared, Madrid society read names into many of the plates, even his beloved Duchess of Alba, the King, and the vicious Queen had not been spared. Today they are still a caustic comment on the life of Spain in the 18th century, the license of the court, the venality of the church.

The exhibition in Gallery XXIV through May is Indian miniatures from the permanent collection. There are two main types of Indian painting represented. One, called Mughal, is the court art of the Mughal rulers of India, it is concerned with portraiture, is based on Persian painting, and is purely aristocratic; the second kind, called Rājput, since most of the paintings come from Rājputana, is a traditional folk art and is entirely Indian. Most of the miniatures in the exhibition belong to this latter school. These superb examples of an ancient, traditional art are best described in the words of Dr. Coomaraswamy: "A vigorous archaic outline is the basis of its language....But such an outline is not only Indian; it leads us back..in its affinities, if not also in historical descent, to Early Asiatic and Aegean. It is paralleled in Egypt, in pre-Hellenic and Mykenean drawing and in Assyrian sculpture. This Rājput art is, in effect, the last phase of a now long-lost style, a style that rises up before us, and awakens in us an effaceable regret".

Among the Rājput paintings might be mentioned as especially distinguished a set from the 17th-18th century representing four of the

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musical modes, and a delicate unfinished drawing of Krishna returning with the cows. The Mughal palace school is well represented by a portrait of Shah Jahan, while an exceptionally large drawing of an animated hunting scene shows the activities of princes. The miniatures are augmented by a number of Indian bronzes, the finest of which is an exquisite small image of the Dancing Siva.

Through an anonymous loan, an interesting gouache, "Vollard as a Clown", by the contemporary French painter, Georges Rouault, has been placed on exhibition in Gallery XV. Rouault is perhaps the most individual of all modern painters. He studied with the imaginative Gustave Moreau, but even more, we see in his work the influence of his first efforts in the field of art. When but fourteen, his father apprenticed him to a maker of stained glass, and Rouault was often called upon to help in the restoration of fragments of 12th and 13th century windows. He never lost his love for the rich, full reds and blues, and the heavy enframement seen in all his drawing recalls the ribbons of lead that held the ancient glass together.

Today he ranks as France's chief expressionist, a lyric painter with a profound and religious mysticism, whose humility stems from the middle ages, a dreamer, yet a man who is vitally alive and one of the foremost traditional influences in his native art.

FRIENDS OF ART: Two meetings of the Study Class will be held during the month of May. On Wednesday morning the tenth, the Water Colours in the current loan exhibitions will be discussed. The attention of members will also be called to any important exhibitions to be held in New York during the spring and summer. On Wednesday, May 24th, a study of 18th Cen. American chairs from the permanent collection will be made. • This will be the last meeting of the study class until October.

EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT: The Marionette Play, "The Story of Old Parr", announced for April 22nd, was postponed until May 6th and will be given on that Saturday morning at 10:30 in the Atkins Auditorium. Admission is free and you are cordially invited to attend.

Enrollment for Summer Classes for Children will begin on June 3rd and announcement will be made in the June news letter of the schedule of classes offered.

The Little Museum announces for its current exhibition a display of Chinese Shadow Puppets, in conjunction with theatrical and domestic costume accessories. The Chinese Shadow Puppets are kindly lent to the Gallery by Captain Harry Starkey Aldrich of Manhattan, Kansas, and represent a most important side of the Chinese theatre. They are designed to be shown in silhouette behind a translucent screen and so, aside from the outline, all features and inner markings are cut out. The best of such puppets are made of very thin stiffened leather with designs of incredible fineness, cut with the utmost sureness and skill. The interest of the silhouette is heightened by the brilliant colours obtained by dyeing the leather. In technical execution and drawing, the figures lent by Captain Aldrich are of the highest quality and may well date from the 18th century. The exhibition will continue until the middle of the month.

OUT OF TOWN VISITORS: During the month of April, the Gallery has been host to more than 2,000 grade and high school students from Missouri, Kansas, Iowa and Nebraska, a total of 83 different groups. Many of these are high school senior classes making an educational tour of the city. These groups are admitted to the Gallery without charge and the majority of them are given guide service.

CALENDAR FOR THE MONTH OF MAY

Wed., May 3, 8:00 - Auditorium - Lecture: Tiepolo and His Circle -
Paul Gardner
Sat., " 6, 10:30 - Auditorium - Marionette Play: "The Story of
Old Parr"
Sun., " 7, 4:15 - Auditorium - Concert: Federal Concert Orchestra
Wed., " 10, 11:00 - Library - Friends of Art Study Class
Sun., " 14, 3:30 - Auditorium - Concert: Stephens College Orchestra
Sun., " 21, 3:30 - Auditorium - Concert: Sigma Alpha Iota
Wed., " 24, 11:00 - Library - Friends of Art Study Class
Sun., " 28, 3:30 - Auditorium - Concert: Sponsored by Mr. Richard
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William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art
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